



The Serra Club of Johnson County
Region 9 District 12-2 Central Club 949

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Serran Sphere



A recent encounter with Fr. Dan Morris, Vocation Director for the Archdiocese, afforded an opportunity to get his take on the upcoming installment of the annual men’s vocation discernment retreat known as “Quo Vadis.” Fr. Dan was enthusiastic in his commentary.

“The Quo Vadis retreat is the most significant discernment retreat for men of the Archdiocese,” he pointed out, adding, “Retreatants are present by invitation only.” I asked him about this interesting concept. Fr. Dan was quick to acknowledge that



Fr. Dan Morris

“invitation” does not signal exclusivity. “What an invitation to these young gentlemen means is that they already have a relationship with the Vocation Office and/or their parish priest or chaplain. Furthermore, these men have already shown signs of spiritual maturity when it comes to their relationship with Jesus Christ,” Fr. Dan explained. Such a relationship develops through having previously attended other vocation events or taken part in other discernment groups, or through a consistent engagement in

faith-related ministries at the parish or in high school.

As many as 50 – 75 young men attend the weekend experience, held annually at Savior Pastoral Center in Kansas City, KS.

See Quo Vadis p. 3

Bethany Night/Love’s Reply

A discernment experience for women

Inspiration and miracles. When these realities converge, anything is possible. Just ask Sr. M. Karolyn Nunes, FSGM, the organizer and Mistress of Ceremonies for a recent discernment experience for women held at St. James Academy.

“Because I was already planning to be in the area for the ‘Beyond Benedictine’ Vocation and Ministry fair, I reached out to Fr. Dan Morris to see if he would be interested in putting together some discernment events for women. There has never been anything comparable to an Andrew Dinner or Quo Vadis retreat for women to explore discernment and there is certainly a need and a hunger

See Bethany p. 5



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MEETING DATES:

- 12/2/2021—General Membership Meeting, Curé of Ars.
- 12/20/2021—Board Meeting, 6:30 PM, Cornerstone Companies
- 1/6/2022—General Membership Meeting and Annual Chili Cook-off, Curé of Ars



Rev. Mr. Andrew Gaffner
Theology IV

MEET REV. MR. ANDREW GAFFNEY

“Words cannot describe how excited I am for that day,” exclaimed Deacon Andrew Gaffney when I asked him to describe his feeling as his priestly ordination date approaches. “After nine long years of hard work in formation and studies the day is finally arriving,” he reflected. “There are some nights that I will be thinking about it and will be unable to sleep as I am so excited.”

Among the aspects of priesthood Deacon Andrew looks forward are celebrating the Eucharist, hearing confessions, “and living intentionally with the people of the parish to which I am assigned,” he said. He describes the vocation to which, he knows, the Lord has called him as one of the greatest blessings of his life. “I love being a deacon now, and I cannot wait to be a priest in order to bring Jesus to the people in a new and different way,” he added.

Gaffney grew up in just outside Tecumseh, KS, a few miles east of Topeka. He is a grad-

*“I love being a deacon now, and I cannot wait to be a priest in order to bring Jesus to people in a new and different way”
~Deacon Andrew Gaffney*

WEBSITE IS UP!

Have a look at the Johnson County Serra Club’s new website! You can find it at [Serra Club of Johnson County \(jocoserra.org\)](http://Serra Club of Johnson County (jocoserra.org))

This dynamic site will become the hub of the Club’s news, activities, and calendar. The monthly newsletter will continue to be published; there will be much more on the website, as the space is nearly unlimited.

LOOKING FOR HELP

If you have an interest in being part of the communications team for the Serra Club of Johnson County, we have need of help.

We look to develop a social media presence with FaceBook and Twitter.

Please email interest to contact@jocoserra.org, or call or text 402-462-0305.

Serra club new website URL: <https://www.jocoserra.org>

CHECK IT OUT!

uate of Hayden High School. He spoke of the point in his life when he recognized his call to the priesthood.

“I believe that I first recognized God’s call to the priesthood when I was a junior in high school at Hayden in Topeka,” he related. “I vividly remember my dad coming to me and telling me that I soon would need to figure out what I was going to do with my life.” An indication that he had recognized a spiritual side of life by that time, Gaffney state that he couldn’t think of a better way than taking that notion to Jesus and asking Him about it in prayer.

“Having attended a Catholic high school, I made the decision that I would dedicate half of my lunch period each day to this,” he said. He credits his Catholic education, in part, for the development of his spiritual life. Slowly, over many months, Deacon Andrew recognized the Lord revealed that plan He had for his life. At the time he realized God’s call, he acknowledges “that was one of the last things that I wanted to do,” adding, “I wanted to attend KU with the rest of my friends, but the Lord had a different plan for me.”

Gaffney acknowledges that, over time, he warmed up to this idea. Reflecting on that time in his life, Gaffney admits, “It is hard to believe that it was almost a decade ago that I was in that chapel initially discerning this call to which God was leading me.”

Shortly after that moment in the chapel when he recognized God’s call, Deacon Andrew says he began to speak with Fr. Mitchel Zimmerman (who was vocation director at that time) about the movements that he had experienced in prayer. “As time continued, my confirmation to go to seminary strengthened and I made the decision to go.”

“I knew that the Lord was calling me to something. I thought I would go for a year and Jesus, or somebody else, would tell me that this wasn’t for me.” Yet, year after year, Deacon Andrew identifies that Lord has “continued to confirm the path He is leading me down and I couldn’t be more happy or full of joy!”

Gaffney credits Fr. Jerry Volz, his childhood pastor at St. Matthew Parish in Topeka, as a positive influence on his vocation. “He is a man who deeply loved is people. He was unafraid to challenge them when they needed it and unafraid to show his love for his people.” “Hearing him preach on Holy Thursday’s growing up was one of the most inspirational things for me. Why? He had a deep love for his priesthood and the vocation that our Lord had called him to, and that came out in his preaching.” Gaffney recalls that, at his last Mass before he moved to a new parish, Fr. Volz made it very clear that it was not him who accomplished everything that he had done in the parish, but rather the Holy Spirit working through him which led parishioners to encounter Jesus in the sacraments. This impressed young Gaffney.

He also credits his father. “He is a man with a large caring heart. He taught me what it was to be a man and how to love one’s family. He always put us first, whether it was taking a night shift job to provide for the family or picking us up on the side of the road because one of our cars had broken down. We always came first in his life and he taught me so much about what the heart of a father truly looks like.”

QUO VADIS

Continued from p.1

The theme for this year's retreat, scheduled December 17 – 19, is **"After His Own Heart."** The retreat master is Rev. Luke Ballman, a priest of the Archdiocese of Atlanta who currently serves at the USCCB as the head of the Office of Consecrated Religious and Priestly Life.

The event begins on Friday evening with a pizza dinner, followed by the first of three 45-minute retreat talks, which are followed by small group discussions. Later that evening, men get to hear the witness of three priests of the Archdiocese. "We strive for some differences in these witness talks," Fr. Dan said. While all priests may relate in some way to the group, the effort is to give the young men an appreciation that vocation stories are as individual as are the men who receive the call to priesthood. "It gives the young men the opportunity to understand that priests and seminarians are every day, ordinary guys that love Jesus Christ," he noted.

Saturday morning is a special time during the Quo Vadis weekend. This year the group will once again be able to travel to visit the Community of the Lamb to celebrate Mass with Archbishop Naumann, followed by a catered lunch with the religious community. Last year, because of COVID, the group stayed at Savior Pastoral Center and invited area religious to the Saturday morning event, along with a limited number of Serrans (again due to COVID). "This proved to be as successful as the past off-site experiences," Fr. Dan mused, adding, "the Holy Spirit always has a way of bearing fruit in such situations." He also added that it is good for the guys to meet the very people who are praying for, and supporting them in the discernment of their vocation.

Saturday evening includes a panel of seminarians designed specifically to advantage the reality that the seminarians, in being contemporary to the retreatants, can speak to them perhaps in ways that older men may not.

The Quo Vadis weekend includes two opportunities for attendees to experience Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, the opportunity to receive God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, an opportunity for a one-on-one meeting with Archbishop Naumann, as well as a chance to speak personally with Fr. Dan or the retreat master, Fr. Luke Ballman. Of course, there is also time for recreation, sports, board games; and, as Fr. Dan put it, "a chance to hang out and get to know our seminarians for a substantial amount of time."

"Experiencing the fraternity enjoyed among our seminarians is often a guy's greatest takeaway from the weekend," he added.

I asked Fr. Dan how Serra Club members can contribute. He was quick to recognize past contributions of Serrans, including the preparation and distribution of prayer cards for retreatants, praying for retreatants and retreat staff through the Quo Vadis weekend, financial contributions for gifts for the attendees, and underwriting activities for the attendees. Last year, retreatants each received a Word on Fire Bible. Fr. Dan described what was a particularly poignant moment at the 2020 retreat. "At the end of the retreat last year, we told the group that Serrans aren't just praying for you. We im-

pressed upon them that Serrans are a group whose children and grandchildren are their peers, and that the Serran prayer is a very personal prayer for the young men and their generation." He added his belief, "This helped our retreatants get a bigger sense of the Church." Fr. Dan also mentioned a legendary desert/snack table assembled and replenished throughout the weekend by Serrans. "The guys simply could not stop talking about the world's best snack table!" he proclaimed.

Fr. Dan described his conviction that Quo Vadis is an important event that has led to an increase in the number of young men considering a priestly vocation. "Currently," he said, "we have more than ten young men in application for entry to the seminary next year." "This is remarkable work of the Holy Spirit through experiences like Quo Vadis and the ongoing mission of Serrans throughout our Archdiocese," he added.

I also spoke with seminarian, Aaron Waldeck, about his experience at Quo Vadis during his years at KU, prior to the seminary. "That was a long time ago," he said with a smile. Waldeck is currently in a Pastoral Year at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Kansas City, KS. He will return to Theology III at Kenrick Glennon Seminary in the fall of 2022.

"I attended Quo Vadis in winter, 2015, during my junior year at KU," Waldeck mused, adding "It was a time when I was not ready to commit to attending seminary. I figured this was a low-pressure way to really determine where God was calling me after college."

I asked Aaron what he learned during the weekend discernment experience. He said that he learned that he was not the only one tentative and uncertain in considering seminary life and the priesthood. He related that the weekend afforded him his first opportunity at praying the Liturgy of the Hours in community with other men seeking God's will in their lives. The most significant takeaway for Aaron was clarification of seminary, seminarians, formation, "and a host of other things which were previously unclear."

"As a result, I began to feel like God was indeed calling me in the direction of seminary, at least for a year, at least to give it a try."

In response to a question about what he might say to young men considering the Quo Vadis experience, Waldeck offered the following. "There is no pressure. It's all in your head. You don't get ordained a priest because you attend Quo Vadis. God is only asking you to take one step at a time." He added, "You don't commit to something in one weekend that in fact takes 7-9 years to complete."

His final, well-spoken piece of advice: "Consider giving God space and time to speak to you."



*Aaron Waldeck
Pastoral Year*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SERRA CLUB
OF JOHNSON COUNTY**

**2021-22
Officers**

President
John Weber

President Elect
Dale Romme

**Immediate Past
President**
Doug Leibbrandt

Secretary
Judy Rielley

Treasurer
Chuck Lillis

Vice Presidents

Vocations
Judy Mueller

Membership
Joane Wilkerson

Programs
John Caton

Communications
Michael Skoch

Trustees
Len Chmelka
Ray Zielinski
George Len

Date	Agenda	Location
December 2 Thursday	General Membership Meeting 6/30 PM	Curé of Ars Leawood, KS
December 2 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	Zoom link on the Website calendar
December 3 Friday	First Friday Holy Hour for Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
December 9 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Voca- tions 7:30 PM	Zoom link on the Website calendar
December 12 Sunday	Membership Event All weekend Masses	Church of the Nativity Leawood, KS
December 16 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Voca- tions 7:30 PM	Zoom link on the Website calendar
December 17 Friday	Quo Vadis Discernment Retreat for Men	Savior Pastoral Center Kansas City, KS
December 19 Sunday	Membership Event All weekend Masses	Church of the Ascension Overland Park, KS
December 20 Monday	JOCO Serra Board Meeting	Cornerstone Companies Overland Park, KS
December 23 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Voca- tions 7:30 PM	Zoom link on the Website calendar
December 25 Saturday	Global Rosary for Vocations 0800 AM	Zoom link on the Website calendar
January 6 Thursday	General Membership Meeting 6:30 PM Annual Chili Cook-off	Curé of Ars Leawood, KS See Website calendar for details

Photos from the recent Bethany Night/Love's Reply Women's Discernment Event at St. James



among the young women of the Archdiocese,” Sr. Karolyn said. “The idea was born of that need, my passion for helping women grow in awareness of God’s love and call, and connections to the area,” Sr. Karolyn offered, adding with her sense of humor coming through, “not to mention open calendars for both Fr. Dan and me!”

Sr. Karolyn is the [Vocations Director for the Franciscan Sisters of the Martyr St. George](#) in Alton, IL. She taught for 3 years at St. James. In her current role, Sr. Karolyn facilitates a women’s discernment group in St. Louis that meets monthly. Having written the content, she wanted to try to present a portion of it in a shorter format for the young women of the Archdiocese of Kansas City. “This was a great place to try and from what I could tell it was successful,” she reported.



Sr. Karolyn Nunes

The weekend consisted of two different events: Bethany Night, a Saturday evening encounter so named for the supper at Bethany that Jesus shared with Marth and Mary, focused on the “one thing necessary” message that He gave; and Love’s Reply, a Sunday retreat that included Mass, time for silent prayer, opportunity for confession, Liturgy of the Hours, and recreation with the sisters. Three talks, presented by women in different vocational roles, rounded out the day. “Trusting in Love,” established the reality that trust in God’s love and plan must be the foundation of all discernment and was given by Sr. Miracles of the [Poor of Jesus Christ](#). “Worthy of Love,” given by Sr. Karolyn, addressed identity as a daughter and discussed receiving the Father’s love, so essential to becoming a bride and mother in either consecrated life or marriage.

SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS

December/January

Deacon Sudheep Kodigandla
- January 13

William Rosson -January 22

Will Sutherland -January 28

Mark your calendar with Seminarian Birthdays and pray for the seminarian’s intention.

“The idea was born of that need, my passion for helping women grow in awareness of God’s love and call, and connections to the area.” ~Sr. Karolyn

“Love’s Reply,” saying ‘yes’ to God with Mary’s Fiat as a model for our response to God’s call, was given by [Karen Lombardi](#), a consecrated virgin living in the world who serves in the Archdiocese.

Sr. Karolyn expressed her gratitude to Kelly Kmiecik, ArchKCK Vocations Administrative Assistant, who especially helped with setting up the meals. Consecrated religious from the following communities participated in the weekend: Sister Servants of Mary, Ministers to the Sick, Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus from St. Louis, Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George, Society of Our Lady of the Trinity (SOLT); and Franciscans Poor of Jesus Christ.



The goal of the weekend was to provide a space for young women from the Archdiocese to come and open themselves to the loving plan of God in a new way. Sr. Karolyn’s hope is that retreatants were able to experience God’s redeeming love, hear His voice, and receive some encouragement as they move forward in saying yes to God’s plan for their lives whatever that plan might be. “I wanted to make sure they had some practical tools for growing in their prayer life and in discerning God’s will in the little things.” She spoke the reality that becoming familiar with His voice in the little things only serves as preparation for response to the greater plans of God.

Eight women attended Bethany Night and twelve attended Love’s Reply on Sunday. Most of the participants were high school juniors and seniors from St. James Academy and Maur Hill. Each woman received a journal and a series of reflection sheets to guide their prayer and based on the content used for the Love’s Reply group in St. Louis. Each also received a copy of **“Have I been with you: Personal Prayer for Young Disciples,”** identified by Sr. Karolyn as a very helpful booklet written by Fr. Paul Hoelsing who serves as the vice-rector of formation at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis and forms many of the seminarians and young priests of the Archdiocese of KCK.

Sr. Karolyn already has for future discernment experiences for women. “We would like to make these events at least an annual occurrence. Perhaps another possibility would be to have a full weekend retreat at some point,” she said. I asked how the laity can help.

“The prayers and support of the laity, including Serrans, are invaluable,” she responded. Area Serra clubs (KCK and JO-CO) sponsored meals for the weekend. Sr. Karolyn said vocation work happens on several levels. “My words for those levels are: Inspire, Inquire, Invite, Invest,” she offered. The weekend events involved all four of those actions. “As lay people, Serrans too can live accordingly, inspiring young people by their holy and faithful marriages,” she related. Sr. Karolyn further acknowledged the great value in engaging young people in conversation about their vocations, inquiring about whether they have asked God about their vocation. “Invite them to participate in such events as Bethany Night and Love’s Reply, or the men’s discernment events in the archdiocese,” she recommended, “and then invest in prayerful support, accompanying young people as discernment unfolds.” A terrific recipe for success!

**SERRA CLUB
OF JOHNSON COUNTY**

The mission of the Serra Club of Johnson County is to pray for and support vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.

Membership is open to lay Catholics inspired to join the mission of prayer and support for vocations.

Invite friends to email a note of interest in joining the Club to: contact@jocoserra.org

The club will soon launch a new website. Stay tuned for this exciting development!

SERRAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Saint Joseph, her spouse, Saint Junipero Serra, and all the saints, an increase of laborers for Your church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls, through the same Jesus Christ Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever, and ever. Amen.

Prayer is the basis of Serra.

We pray like everything depends on God and work like everything depends on us!

 **Like us on Facebook: @jocoserra**

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PLEASE
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STAMP
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